

What Should I Practice? (Woodwind Player Edition)

- 1) Play a few long tones – strengthen the embouchure
 - a. Play notes from a scale as long as you can – choose a new scale to play regularly
 - b. Crescendo and diminuendo as you play the pitches to keep the muscles active and the air moving
 - c. Work with a tuner so that you don't distort the tone
- 2) Practice Scales – the building blocks of music
 - a. Start with one octave scales – but try to stretch them into two and even three octaves (where possible) as soon as you possible can
 - b. Always play scales with a beautiful, well supported sound
 - c. Always work with a tuner both to develop your embouchure and to help your ear
- 3) Practice articulation
 - a. A clean beginning on each pitch is essential
 - i. Flute: It is essential that the tongue touches the hard palate right behind the teeth, as if you are lightly saying “too.”
 - ii. Single Reed and Double Reed: The tongue should touch the reed slightly behind the tip of the reed, as if you are saying “too.” It is essential on Single Reed instruments that the top teeth touch the top of the mouthpiece for proper articulation
 - iii. *Always play with a beautiful, well supported sound*
 - b. Practice scales with a legato tongue – don't allow the air to stop between the notes and always play with a big beautiful tone
 - c. Practice scales with a staccato tongue – strive to start each pitch as you did with the legato tongue and then create separation between pitches by stopping the air, but always with a well-supported, beautiful tone.
- 4) Practice the music you are playing
 - a. Focus on the passages that are giving you the most difficulty
 - b. Always have a goal for your practice (“Today I want to play this section with no missed notes, rhythms or articulations, at a quarter note=88 on my metronome”) – your goal should be
 - i. Short; don't try and do too much at once. If you have time, work one little spot then move on to another one – Rome wasn't built in a day!
 - ii. Specific; have a definite objective that you will focus on
 - iii. Measurable; how will you know that you have achieved your goal for the day? What will the music sound like if you have achieved your daily practice goal?

- iv. Attainable; don't set yourself up for failure by attempting to do too much in one practice session.
 - c. Work slowly and methodically – practicing mistakes just leads to perfect mistakes
 - d. Isolate problems before putting entire passages together – identify correct fingerings, practice rhythms and articulations separately, before adding them to the entire passage.
 - e. Always give attention to the quality of sound you are making – is it a beautiful, well supported tone? If not, fix that first!
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- 5) Play something for fun
 - a. Always end a practice session playing something you particularly enjoy, so that you are excited to come back and play again tomorrow!
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- 6) Applicable Rules:
 - a. No. 10 – They're called wind instruments for a reason.
 - i. Always take a large, relaxed breath before you play anything, and stand or sit in such a way that you can completely fill with air.
 - ii. Play each passage, regardless of dynamic, as if you are setting off on a long journey – with a full tank of gas (air)
 - b. No. 2 – Tension is the enemy
 - i. If you find that parts of your body other than your embouchure or diaphragmatic group are tense, you are getting in the way of creating a beautiful sound – relax!
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